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The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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Editorial Notes

In a meeting with a group of publishers this past month, we found out that our troubles were shared by all. It appears that every month a group of readers fail to get their issues, despite the fact that careful examination of all publishers' records show that the issues were sent out. Naturally, we make every effort—as do others—to cooperate with a reader. Apologies are useless. The chagrin of a reader cannot possibly exceed our own. Sometimes a reader does not get an issue because he fails to notify us of his change of address. Magazines are not forwarded to the addressee but returned to the publisher, who in turn pays double postage on it. Hereafter, we—like other magazine publishers—will not reforward a copy returned to us unless the necessary postage is sent to us by the subscriber.

The paper situation has again become desperate. It seems no matter what type of paper one acquires these days the expense is the same, and that expense in the past year has been slowly climbing higher. Part of the trouble is due to the fact that a group of national magazines has bought up some of the largest paper mills for their own use and the sources from which we and others have gotten our paper supplies in the past have been shut off. The mill that made the fine paper we used in 1941 and early 1942 is, for example, definitely shut off to us now, since it is in the hands of a national magazine.

This past month we ran into a siege of sickness which resulted in closing the office for a whole week. The March issue, mailed on the fourteenth from Easton, Pa., was unavoidably held up a few days. If you recall the date you received your copy and are interested you can figure out the time that the mails take for delivery. The April issue will be similarly delayed, because we are naturally behind time. But delay in publishing is not always due to illness, it is more often than not due to the lateness of review material. Prior to the war the record companies used to send us review material ten days before it appeared on the dealers' counters. These days we often get review material at the same time that it appears on the dealers' counters and sometimes a week later. Many of the smaller companies send in

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review materials weeks after it has been placed on sale.

Decca's FFRR Records

In the past few months we have futilely endeavored to get Decca's FFRR recordings which have been announced as issued for review. Decca tells us that this situation will be cleared up in the near future. To date the company claims there have not been enough records received to send out review copies as the company would like to do. And visiting a number of shops, who gladly cooperate with us, we have found most of the advertised material has not been received, or so few copies that these have gone out before our arrival. There have been some letters from readers on the FFRR recordings registering different complaints. Some contend that the record does not operate in their changer. The FFRR disc is slightly smaller in diameter than most domestic records. This the company tells us will be corrected. It should be noted in passing that many domestic records do not operate in all changers; the fault however is not always with the manufacturer of discs but often with the producer of the changers. Mr. Raynor brought all this out in his excellent article on record changers which appeared in our September 1946 issue. Another complaint against the FFRR disc is that it does not wear too well. This complaint has been voiced to us about other makes of records and has to do with changers and pickups that are too heavy. If a listener is using a pickup made prior to the war which is two ounces or over in weight on the record, he should consult a good service man on the installation of a new pickup.

Heavy pickups play havoc with the vinylite disc as well as the shellac one. Some readers have written us that most foreign records wear more quickly than domestic ones—others have written us the opposite. On cheap machines the poor alignment of pickups often causes undue wear and that wear is not lessened by using thorn needles. Some readers have written to us that certain semi-permanent needles wore their records badly, but we suspect the trouble has not been in the quality of the needle but in the fact that the writer has been using a semi-permanent too long. Discount the advertising blurbs on all semi-permanents which claim that they are good for more than 500 plays without wear. Dr. Matthew Jones, the Ohio physicist, who wrote the now famous needle article for us that appeared in our September 1945 issue, says that the best sapphire should not be used by those who wish to keep their records from undue wear beyond 500 playings. Most metallic semi-permanents are best discarded after 300 plays. A reprint of Dr. Jones' article can be had for 10c in pamphlet form. We will have more to say about needles in the near future, but we will not endeavor to rate one above the other because we believe that the ideal testing of needles cannot be accomplished, and our rea-

sons for this belief will be set forth.

On Correspondence

Our apologies to those friendly readers who have written lengthy letters to us. After nearly four weeks of flu-pneumonia, we are so far behind in correspondence that we have no idea when and how we can catch up. Moreover, it is not always possible for us to recommend everything that a writer desires. We do try to help out when we can, but the time element is often against the answering of long letters as much as we might like to do so. If the problems of various readers were similar we might blanket our replies in our editorial notes, but out of 100 letters often the problems are fully three-quarters individual ones. Where equipment is concerned, our help at a distance can only be guess work. However, sometimes we can make helpful suggestions, and this we try to do whenever possible — though it should be remembered that technical advice often costs us time and money, and we do not accept fees. But if we fail to answer letters, it is not because we are remiss but because we are pressed for time and cannot do justice to the occasion in a short note.

BOOK REVIEWS

MUSIC IN OUR TIME: Trends in Music since the Romantic Era. By Adolfo Salazar. W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., New York. 367 pp., \$5.00.

● Mr. Salazar, residing at present in Mexico, is introduced as the "leading Spanish scholar of our day." Whether as the result of translation or not, this book is not easy reading and its appeal will be for those with a scholarly turn of mind. The author demands of the reader a knowledge of the technical terms of music and a basic understanding of literature and painting. In some ways, the author's interrelation of the arts recalls the writings of the late Paul Rosenfeld, but whereas the latter was a free thinker and an expressionist in writing, Mr. Salazar is always the academician. It has been said that we will never know the real composer in the pages of a book, but we can grow to understand what makes composers tick by reading an astute thinker like Salazar. He relates the composer to his day and shows the interconnection of the arts of his time. At the end of the book he provides a valuable bibliography.

Smart young reviewers will find in this book some laconic summations of composers which will prove helpful in crystallizing their efforts to criticize or praise. It is the scholar who most often furnishes the core of condemnation which is carried on by others, but whereas he is rational the average critic is diffuse. It is

(Continued on page 234)



JOHANNES

B R A H M S

1833-1897

By Neville Cardus

Brahms' death occurred on April 3, 1897. The occasion is being commemorated far and wide by the musical world. Our contribution to the memory of the composer is the present article (the first part of which appeared last month) by the eminent Australian-English critic, Neville Cardus.—Editor.

So far I have tried to define the style of Brahms, to show that he gathered in the crops of a sowing of Beethoven and Schubert, ripened to harvest by the warmth of his own genius. I have tried to relate him to the technical or stylistic (a hateful but convenient word) conditions in which he found the art of music, especially the *modus operandi* of symphonic development. I have tried especially to show that with Brahms, as with every other mortal artist, we should relate what we confidently call his 'faults' to the conditions and material of his art in his day: 'In der Beschränkung', says the wise Goethe, 'zeigt sich erst der Meister.'*

A really scientific criticism would hesitate to use the word 'fault' as a description of some lesion or short-circuit in an artist's imaginative processes; better and more philosophical to call it a necessary trait of style. I am not of course referring to obvious crudities, such as the mannered chromaticism of a Spohr, or the hauled-up pulleys of a Puccini soprano and tenor unison climax. We are considering the so-called defects of the works of a recognized master. Can we think of any one of the masters except as we know him, 'warts and all'? It was once affirmed that Brahms's orchestration was without colour and facility. Would his severest critic, knowing Brahms as he should know him—that is as so much human psychology, temperament, spirit, blood and sinew turned to music—would this critic have

*The master finds himself by observing the law, the limitations of his medium.

the orchestration of Brahms altered? The business of criticism is to root out the *superfluities* or *irrelevances* in an artist's style; fortunately most great artists attend to the job themselves, before the critic is called in at all. Critics might with a refreshing humility consider this point, especially when they are dealing with a composer as ruthlessly self-critical as Brahms. He was not an impulsive son of nature, like Schubert, whose music exposes sometimes many signs of hastiness which any fool can see. We might with profit here attend to Donald Tovey: 'If every one of Brahms's works in sonata-form rewards the effort of a reasoned defence on all points on which attack has been directed, this is not because Brahms is infallible, or acceptable only to those who are ready to take him as gospel. It is, on the contrary, because Brahms was so far from thinking himself infallible that he consented to the publication of nothing to which he had not devoted more severe criticism, long after the work was finished, than could be collected from all the sensible remarks that have been made on his works since they appeared.'**

When we come to think of it—and it is a conclusion to which the philosophy of years eventually leads us—genius except as he has incarnated himself in his works? If he is a genius his faults will be relevant and part of his constitution; maybe—a more searching thought—the 'fault' may be a necessary constituent in the whole, the dash of poison that retains good health. A phrase comes to mind of Ethel Smyth's: let it be printed in warning letters before the desks of all critics: 'Where is the error, and can it be corrected without imperilling something essential?' And directly underneath Dame Ethel's awe-inspiring query let the phrase of Brahms himself be written; not in letters of fiery admonition but in good honest everyday calligraphy: 'Das sieht jeder Narr!'

III

It is proved already that Brahms is little better than one of the great geniuses of music; and it will go near to be thought so shortly. Thus may Dogberry the critic

speak now. I am not, of course, suggesting that we should bow down without question or doubt before the masters; proper appreciation of a work of art depends as much on a perception of its limitations as on the fully realized parts. We must look out for features of style that do not belong to the composer; the only 'faults' that matter are irrelevances; nobody is privileged to point out to genius any other sort of 'fault'. It is not enough to say that Brahms sometimes expresses impotence, as in sections of the first movement of the C minor symphony: he may have wished to express impotence; an easy confident style in this movement would have been the worst of all artists' faults—which is to talk beside the subject. The dichotomy of classical and romantic characteristics of technique was not irrelevant, as we have seen, to the style of Brahms; if the elements do not always happily mingle, very well then; we are the reader to enjoy the marvellous hymenal when they do. Let me once again stress the fact that Brahms was the first composer to bring the classical and romantic technique of expression to complete and fruitful union; it was an amazing marriage. Beethoven had fertilized the symphonic soil for any seed of expression; from Schubert's untidy but lovely garden, seeds were blown over the years to Brahms's field, where he tilled with implements forged in the same foundry which forged Beethoven's. Schubert's gorgeous plant blew to falling leaves and petals too soon in the C major symphony, for want of a deep-rooted symphonic-trunk; Brahms grafted it on a stouter tree, which naturally acquired a knotty twisted branch here and there. Without the knots there could have been no stout trunk. It is because there is so much of breadth in Brahms, so many aspects of the man, that narrow folk are sure sooner or later to find him rubbing them the wrong way . . . Suppose that on the desert island a castaway is washed up, and that he is a musician entirely different in mind and nature from myself; whether I like it or not he must be my only companion for goodness knows how long. Well, though we shall certainly quarrel on many things—two individuals day by day thrust into one another's way would occasionally have to quarrel or die—we shall not quarrel about music. For suppose that my companion is anti-

**Essay on Brahms in Cobbett's *Survey of Chamber Music*.

romantic, one of William James's tough-minded fraternity; and I the opposite, a lover of sentiment—moonshine, if you like. Well, my companion need not listen to Brahms (I take it that a piano has been saved from the wreck and a gramophone with all extant records of Brahms); he need not listen while I am playing the first movement of the Second Symphony, with its mysterious horns at the outset, and the darkening forest of an orchestra, where solemn trombones seem to loom before us—trees as men walking—and the low distant thunder of drums is heard; he need not listen to the G major violin sonata, need not come into its intimate world, where fancy and gentle melancholy sing together, a twilight piece, silver-greyness in everything. The rich glow of the third movement's dark empurpled cloud would doubtless offend his hard spirit; but he need not listen. Nor need he even try for politeness' sake to share my rapture as Brahms throws a rope of violin tone high to the turret of the allegro of the violin concerto; likewise may he turn away while I give myself to the clarinet quintet and the solo instrument's gush of notes which fall on the evening air like the song of Thomas Hardy's darkling thrush; nor need he be jealous of me as I sweeten my heart with the 'cello melody of the slow movement of the second piano concerto; or as I let my heart dance to the lilt of the waltzes; or ripple my fingers in the gracious texture of the A major intermezzo; or as I leap down the hill of the opening of the third symphony into the daffodil fields. No! my friend will not only not be jealous; if there is another piano or gramophone handy he may not even heed my enjoyment of Brahms the romantic; he will be invigorating his mind with gigantic double-fugue of the piano variations on the Handel theme—a giant's causeway of a fugue; or he will scale the heights of the introduction to the C minor symphony, with the Brahms who attempted to put himself by the side of Prometheus Beethoven and the snatch fire from the gods; or he will revel in the daring and intricacy of the Paganini variations—music which turns brains into fingers and fingers into brains. Or he will meditate on man's vanity as he listens to the 'Vier Ernstige Gesänge'; or he will stimulate his intellect in the knotty rough weather of the

finale of the third violin sonata. He will go, too, with Brahms and Goethe into the questioning gloom of the 'Harzreise'—all these things our composer will feed him on. And the joke is that the laugh must always be on my side; for while he may not share my happiness in the romantic and lyrical Brahms, I shall share all the sterner delights of *his* choices. No; we should not quarrel about Brahms, my imaginary friend and I, in our desert isolation. And I can't think of any other composer who day by day could by himself likewise serve two dissimilar tastes in music and prevent contention and a sense of grievance on one side or the other.

There are, you see, surprises for all who come to Brahms for the first time after having heard of the legends still in circulation about him. I wish all young musicians whose minds hold echoes of the ancient chatter about the drabness and inhuman complexity of Brahms could have heard—and once heard, heard for a lifetime—a performance by Jelly D'Aranyi and the Hallé Orchestra of the Brahms violin concerto, conducted by Hamilton Harty at a Hallé concert years ago. A woman in the Brahms violin concerto? you might ask. People in the mid-nineteenth century certainly objected to a woman violinist in Brahms even as they objected to a woman composer of any music that didn't sound like Chaminade. Brahms was regarded as entirely masculine then—the twin B to Beethoven, born a little later, but as hard of bone and no more concerned than Beethoven with women in his music. There are no women in Beethoven; at least, one of marriageable years. Leonora is really an abstract idea, an ideal, a musical sort of 'das Ewig-Weibliche'. Nobody could make a ballad to *her* eyebrow. But Brahms is often making love in his music, no doubt in a middle-aged manner (as we have seen); but many women like it that way. Is not the 'Sapphische Ode' proof that Brahms did not inherit too much of the austerity of Beethoven, who couldn't have written the song to save his life? Well, the adagio of the violin concerto is not far removed in spirit or tone from the 'Ode', though a touch of the 'Weigenlied' tenderness comes in to keep the music close to the cradle in which so many slow movements of Brahms are rocked. A notable fact about Brahms is that many of his first subjects are

strong and masculine and that nearly all the second subjects are feminine.* That is perhaps why his music is so rich and various: as Hans Sachs sings:

Ob euch gelang
Ein rechtes Paar zu finden
Das zeigt sich jetzt zu Kindern.

Jelly d'Aranyi, niece of Joachim, revealed to me the rarer glories of the violin concerto for the first time. When the song of the second subject, with its full flowing sea of braveness was reached, she rode on it gorgeously. And in the adagio, where the fiddle never takes up the melody to itself but muses upon the grave loveliness in some of the most rapt decoration ever written, this highly-spirited artist played as one listening to half-heard sounds contained Then towards the close of this movement, where the rising curves of the violin and the quickening tempo suggest that beauty, having been rapt for so long, can no longer contain herself—then we saw Jelly d'Aranyi pressing her cheek to her violin as though giving warmth to it. And in the finale, she tossed back her head and flashed the vivacity of her nature into the Hungarian rhythms. I dwell on this memory, during a study of Brahms, not only for the pleasure recaptured, but because it is my main wish to present the Brahms that to this day is placed in the shadow of the more palpable giant. There is hardly a work by him—I do not exclude even the Double concerto—in which Brahms the intimate poet of mild-eyed romance may not be found. In this gritty work, and one or two like it, the newcomer to the composer may well experience the delighted astonishment of the student of Browning, who has been warned of the obscurity and aridness of 'Sordello', one day comes across the lines which tell of Sordello and Palma, how they exchanged low laughter

now would gush

Word upon word, to meet a sudden flush.

As Brahms grew older he entwined more and more romantic garlands on the classical trellis. At times his mind seemed to develop in a direction contrary to that of most minds of men of genius. He did not, unlike

Beethoven, for example, seek for a greater simplicity, a less and less sensuous tone; he did not become more and more elliptical in expression. He discovered a lyric vein and colour of which he apparently had little idea when he was a young man; that is, if he may be said ever to have been young. His early piano sonata in F sharp minor, composed before he was twenty, is a thousand years old in the head; and it is harsh and unfriendly; the rise of the legend of his austerity can be understood by an examination of most of the works of his youth and early manhood. Even his symphonies gain in the impulse of song as they succeed one another. In the C minor symphony Brahms made a magnificent effort to lift himself to the heroic austere heights of the greater Beethoven; but never again did he venture in that direction of sublime awe and loneliness; the Second and the Third are romantic symphonies; the Fourth is also lyrical *au fond*; the Passacaglia finale can be analysed in terms of rich enough melody. The C minor symphony—fantastically hailed in its day as the Tenth—is glad to come down to the valleys, once the abyss of the first movement has been crossed; the allegretto has a miniature touch that would have gone in danger of its slender life in the smithy of music in which Beethoven forged his C minor symphony, or the Ninth; the delicate texture of this allegretto might at any moment have been brutally torn by one of the hammer-blows which in Beethoven are constantly aimed at the heart of a movement. The main theme of the finale of the Brahms C minor symphony, once on a time absurdly related in spirit to the main theme of the finale of the 'Ninth', has for all its breadth a certain ease and warmth of motion psychologically poles apart from Beethoven! It is almost a German drinking-song; it might easily have occurred during the 'Akademische Fest' overture. The music of Brahms was seldom disturbed by the dramatic changeful stress which with Beethoven became the principal characteristic of the symphony. A contrast of Beethoven and Brahms in terms of orchestras dynamic will illumine this point. The art of music frequently seems unable to contain Beethoven; the drive of his daemon imperilled the whole symphonic structure; you can hear him shaking it with vast reiterated chords,

*Consider first movements of the Third Symphony; the D minor piano concerto; the violin concerto, etc.

We may realize how little inclined Brahms must have been to measure himself for the putting-on of Beethoven's mantle if we consider the frequency in Beethoven of reiterated notes and chords, and the comparative scarcity of them in Brahms. Forceful insistence on the same note or chord is a dramatic, not a lyrical device; it means a breaking-up of a song-sequence. Brahms's use of repeated-notes falls short of Beethoven's disregard of a melodic context; Brahms scarcely ever forgot that the reiterated chord is fatal to the flow and fullness of song. When Brahms's music does halt or contends gruffly, it does not forget the course of song; Brahms is merely clearing his throat and chest before beginning again. The reputation of Brahms as a man of austere mind and nature was largely the consequence of the need of the schools of his day—they insisted that he should carry the standard against the Wagnerians and Lisztians—especially the Lisztians and their so-called romanticism. The joke is that it was Brahms, not Liszt, who eventually came close to the heart of true romance. The romantic style in music runs to song; for it is a state or outcome of subjective emotion. The Lisztians sought to express in music the external event or character seen in an attitude. Their aim and effect was dramatic or pictorial; objective, in a word—certainly not romantic.

In Brahms youth looks ahead to age, and age finds another impulse, as wisdom glances back over the years. Hamburg joins hands with Vienna. Early spring frosts once threatened to freeze the flow of the melody of Brahms; but sunshine of high noon and maturity freed the source—and the source was never afterwards forgotten. It was, you may be surprised to realize, a folk-song source; it attained with its growing sweep and broadening banks a classic grandeur and dignity, yet it remained true, in its mildness and warmth, to its lowly origins. Schubert was the first composer of the *bourgeoisie*, but he did not live long enough to expel vagrancy from his art. In Brahms classicism and romanticism alike are fused in an urbane blood-stream; if at times the aspect of Brahms is a little uncompromising it is only on the surface. In his music, age approves of youth, as Samuel Langford wrote, and both are bound

together by the piety of consistent and noble art. And how various an art! Clearly he is the composer for our desert island; we have found the right man. We need only the desert island.



Collectors' Issues

By Stephen Fassett

BIZET: *Carmen—Seguidilla*; and DE FALLA: (a) *El Pano Moruno* (b) *Seguidilla murciana*; sung to her own accompaniment by Marguerite Namara (soprano). IRCC No. 239, 10-inch disc, price \$1.75 (Electrical Recording).

▲ Although issued under the seal of The International Record Collectors' Club, an organization which generally specializes in famous voices of the past, this new recording by Marguerite Namara should appeal to an unusually wide audience. For Namara is a fascinating artist and her singing is notable for exotic coloring, verve, and rare artistry. I have never heard the *Seguidilla* sung with such fire, abandon and subtlety, or, for that matter, with such effective diction. Her Carmen, as heard on this record, is completely convincing—a wild, reckless gipsy

shamelessly enticing Don José in tones that are accented with irresistible allure.

The blood of her Spanish grandmother, the benefits of coaching received from the composer himself, and her own creative imagination combine to make Namara's performances of these two De Falla songs (from his *Seven Popular Songs*) sound as though voiced by a born flamenco singer. It seems incredible that an American could find in her voice so much of the color of Spain.

Marguerite Namara is no longer a young singer, but here there is no indication whatsoever of waning vocal powers; the voice is firm and brilliant. Her use of chest-tone quality is both arresting and appropriate. As a self-accompanist her ability is really extraordinary. She plays with freedom and vitality, and with an exciting command of rhythm. It is evident that so many years of accompanying herself have fused voice and piano into an artistic whole that is seldom found in the world of music.

The sound engineers have done their work well and the reproduction is first class.

BERLIOZ: *Damnation de Faust—Nature immense*; and LALO: *Roi d'Ys—Vainement, ma biene aimée*; sung by Charles Rousseliere. IRCC No. 3000, 10-inch disc, price \$1.75.

▲Charles Rousseliere was a member of the Paris Opera for some years and also sang at the Metropolitan in 1906-07, but this is the first time a recording of his voice has been made available to American collectors. Bauer's *Historical Records* lists a number of G&T's of 1903; there were also some Pathé discs, and it was from two of them that IRCC dubbed these selections. The reproduction of the voice is effective, if rather crude, revealing a tenor of excellent quality. Unfortunately the interpretations are not first-rate, which may or may not be due to the primitive recording conditions of the time. Rousseliere fails to achieve the smooth, flowing legato which a successful rendition of the Lalo air must have; and if the *Damnation de Faust* solo is vocally grateful music, which I doubt, he does not succeed in making it sound so. But at least, after long years of waiting, collectors can now hear a famous voice hitherto unknown to them.

BIZET: *Carmen—Habanera*; and BIZET:

Carmen—Seguidilla; sung by Margarethe Ober. IRCC No. 3001, 10-inch disc, price \$1.75.

▲Margarethe Ober was certainly one of the best mezzos of her time, judging from the splendid Victor discs she made in 1915. Her Pathé discs, also very fine, are less well known, and it is good to have these clear, full-toned re-recordings which, unlike the hill-and-dale originals, can be played on any standard phonograph. However, I should have preferred less hackneyed material. Still, even though I do not care for *Carmen* in German, I must say that Ober sings the two arias so well, with such tonal opulence, that she inspires forgiveness. The orchestral accompaniments are, of course, more than a little distressing, but the voice triumphs over all.

WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolda—Love duet*, sung in English by Florence Easton and Arthur Carron; and WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolda—Love-death*; sung in English by Florence Easton. IRCC No. 3004, 12-inch disc, price \$2.25.

▲Electrically recorded off-the-air in 1942, with the accompaniment of a full symphony orchestra, this record further substantiates Mme. Easton's remarkable gifts as a Wagnerian singer. She was 58 years old at the time, but many a younger soprano would be proud to sing Isolda's taxing music with such brilliant and secure tones. I have not yet had an opportunity to compare this with other recorded versions of the *Love-death*, but a single hearing convinced me that it stands up well against the others. For the *Love-duet* I care less, partly because Carron, for all his inherently good vocal material, is not convincing Tristan. Also I am disturbed by the fact that the English words are more clearly audible than they are in the *Love-death*, for as a rule I do not care for opera sung in English and I regret to say this performance is no exception. Others, however, may enjoy the music all the more because it is sung in our own language, especially since the translation was made by Mme. Easton herself. Played with ample volume on a fine machine, as I heard it, this is an impressive-sounding record and one which all admirers of Florence Easton's versatile art should own.



Recent French Releases

(July-December 1946)
H.M.V.

BONNAL: *Trois Noëls* (Poems of the 14th Century); Janine Micheau (soprano), with Chorus and Orch., dir. Marcel Cariven (3 sides), and BONNAL: *Noël des Poèmes Franciscains*; Janine Micheau and H. B. Etcheverry (baritone) (1 side). Discs DA 5004/05.

FAURE: *Dolly—Berceuse*; and RAVEL: *Pièce en forme de habanera*; Jacques Thibaud (violin) with Tasso Janopoulo (piano). Disc DA 4999.

GOUNOD: *Roméo et Juliette*—*Ah! leve-toi, soleil*, and *Polyeucte*—*Stances*; José Lucioni (tenor), with Orch., dir. Eugene Bigot. Disc DB 11,115.

HAHN: *Concerto provencal* (for flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn and strings); Chamber Orchestra, dir. Fernand Oubradous. Discs DA 4993/95.

MOZART: *Quartet in C major, K. 465*; Quarour Loewenguth. Discs 11,120/122.

MOZART (arr. Kreisler): *Rondo in G major*; Blanche Tarjus (violin) and Mireille Monnard (piano). Disc DA 5003.

ROSSINI: *Le Barbier de Séville*—*Air de Figaro*; and VERDI: *La Traviata*—*Lors qu'à de folles amours*; Willy Clément (baritone) and Paris Opera Orch., dir. Louis Fourestier. Disc DB 11,123.

ROUSSEL: *Serenade, Opus 30*; Quintette Instrumental Pierre Jamet. Discs DB 11,124/125.

SARASATE: *Zapateado, Opus 23, No. 2*; and CHOPIN (arr. Bazelaire): *Prelude, Opus 28, No. 4*; Paul Tortelier (cello) with Tasso Janopoulo (piano). Disc DB 11,118.

THOMAS: *Mignon—Adieu Mignon* and *Elle ne croyait pas*; Charles Richard (tenor)

with Lamoureaux Orch., dir. Eugéne Bigot. Disc DB 11,119.

Columbia

ALVAZIAN: *Danse populaire russe*; and KARJINSKY: *Esquisse*; Maurice Maréchal (cello) with Henrietta Roget (piano). Disc LF 230.

BREVAL: *Sonata* (3 sides); and FRANCOEUR: *Sonata* (1 side); Bernard Michelin (cello) with Tasso Janopoulo (piano). Discs LFX 691/92.

DEBUSSY: *Etude pour les arpèges composés*, and *Jardin sous la pluie*; Marie Thérèse Fourné (piano). Disc LFX 693.

FAURE: *Bacarolle No. 3*; Mlle. Fourné (piano). Disc LF 231.

HONEGGER: *Trois psaumes, Deux chansons*; sung by Eliette Schennerberg with the composer at the piano. Disc LFX 690.

RAMEAU: *Les Surprises de l'Amour—Suite*; Maurice Maréchal (cello) with Henriette Roget (piano). Disc LFX 694.

SCHUBERT: *Quartet in D Minor (Death and the Maiden)*; Quatuor Calvet. Discs LFX 695/99.

Pathé

BEETHOVEN: *Variations on a Theme from Mozart's Magic Flute*; Joseph Benvenuti (piano) and André Navarra (cello). Discs PDT 107/08.

DONIZETTI: *Lucia de Lammermoor—Mad Scene*; Lucienne Jourfier (soprano), with Orch. dir. of Eugene Bigot. Disc PDT 111.

FAURE: *Le parfum impérissable*, and *Nell*; Ninon Vallin (soprano) with Maurice Faure (piano). Disc PD 51.

GOUNOD: *Faust-Cavatine*; Georges Noré (tenor) with Paris Opera Orch., dir. Louis Fourestier. Disc PD 65.

HONEGGER: *Toccata et Variations*; Jacqueline Potier (piano). Discs PD 52/53.

LISZT: *La Campanella*, and *Liebestraum*; Jeanne-Marie Darré (piano). Disc PDT 109.

LOCATELLI: *Sonata for Cello and Piano*; André Navarra and Joseph Benvenuti. Discs PDT 114/15.

MESSANGER: *La Petite Fonctionnaire*; and LECOCQ: *Le Petit Duc*; sung by Fanély Révoil with Orch., dir. Marcel Cariven. Disc PD 31.

MESSIAEN: *Le Baiser de l'Enfant Jésus* (Extrait des Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus, No. 15); Yvonne Loriod (piano). Disc PDT 113.

MOUSSORGSKY: *Le chef d'armée*; and RUBINSTEIN: *Extases*; Charles Soix (basse) with André Tournier (piano). Disc PDT 112.

SAINT-SAENS: *Samson et Dalila* (complete opera); Dalila—Hélène Bouvier, Samson—José Luccioni, Abimelech—Charles Cambon, Le Grand Prêtre—Paul Cabanel, Vielliard hébreu—M. Médus, Chorus and Orch. of Paris Opera, dir. Louis Fourestier. Discs PDT 116/130.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony in D minor (Tragic)*; Association des Concerts, dir. Marius-François Gaillard. Discs PDT 88/91.

Book Reviews

(Continued from page 226)

surprising how many short-sentenced clichés are found in this book interwoven with some appreciably concise erudition. The author spends considerable time on the atonalists, Schoenberg, Berg, etc., and also on Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky. He also writes at length on a number of our American composers, mainly Harris and Cowell, but this section of the book is less persuasive. But it shows his interest in the experimentalists, not all of whom can be called pioneers. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Mr. Salazar, one cannot fail to admire his keen perceptions. —J.N.

OUR AMERICAN MUSIC—Three Hundred Years of It. By John Tasker Howard. Thomas Y. Crowell Co. 1946. 841 pp. Price \$5.00.

●Mr. Howard's worthy tome on American music and composers was first issued over fifteen years ago. Each revision of the book has added much valuable data on contemporary composers, and this—the latest revision—includes much-needed information on many of our younger musicians, not a few of whom have made a name for themselves in the popular field.

This book is justly appraised by its publishers on the jacket as "a definitive history of music in the United States from the very earliest days to the present." Although it does not aim to be a critical treatise the author has wisely punctuated his text with some well-chosen critical comments from leading critics.

Mr. Howard is curator of the American Music Collection of the New York Public Library and a recognized authority on his sub-

ject. We recommend his book to all interested in American music. —J.N.

An Important Re-release

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro*; sung by Audrey Mildmay (soprano: Susanna); Aulikki Rautawara (soprano: Countess); Luise Helletsgruber (soprano: Cherubino); Constance Willis (soprano: Marcellina); Winifred Radford (soprano: Barberina); Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender (baritone: Figaro); Roy Henderson (baritone: Count); Norman Allin and Italo Tajo (bass: Bartolo); Heddle Nash (tenor: Basilio); Fergus Dunlop (bass: Antonio); Morgan Jones (tenor: Curzio); with chorus and orchestra of the Glyndebourne Opera House, Glyndebourne, England, direction of Fritz Busch. Victor sets M- or DM-313, six discs, price \$6.85; M- or DM-314, six discs, price \$6.85; M- or DM-315, five discs, price \$5.85.

▲That Victor has announced the re-issue of this justly celebrated set augurs well for the future—may we not hope for the restoration of many more of the masterpieces so sadly missing from the recent catalogues? There cannot be the least doubt that any collector who has the price will want to own the only "complete" recording of *Figaro*. Although it is not a performance without its limitations, it is surely as satisfactory as any we are likely to hear nowadays. The star of the occasion is, quite properly, Fritz Busch the conductor, whose authority is felt throughout. The singers range from passable to excellent, though the only truly memorable performance is that of Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender as Figaro. Most of the arias have been recorded separately many times, and frequently with more distinction than they are accorded here, yet the singing is always quite acceptable by present-day standards. Unfortunately the recitatives have been omitted, and one or two of the less familiar arias. Perhaps the chief glory of the recording is the ensembles, which are done with good spirit and style. All in all, then, this remains an indispensable set, and one not likely to be bettered for some years to come. —P.L.M.



RECORD NOTES AND

R E V I E W S

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

BLISS: *Baraza* from the film *Men of Two Worlds*; Eileen Joyce (piano), the National Symphony Orchestra and Male Chorus, conducted by Muir Mathieson. Decca FFRR disc K.1174, price \$2.00.

▲Not having seen the film nor being familiar with where or how this music fits into the scheme of things, I cannot say anything

about its subject intention. It begins in a big way and is divided between a musical effect not far from the *Warsaw Concerto* and a quieter more drooping one. Bliss has always been a skillful orchestrator and dramatist, but the material he has pulled out of his bag here is rather pompous and pretentious, aiming for popularity one suspects. The best thing I can say for this piece is it is much better movie music than the *Warsaw Concerto*, but it would seem to me that it requires a knowledge of its setting for true enjoyment, and since the *Warsaw Concerto* does not do that it remains the more successful work. The recording is full and lifelike, but the orchestration is not as clearly or as cleanly outlined as we get it in domestic records. Miss Joyce deserves a hand for her firm, conscientious work at the piano.

—P.H.R.

CAILLIET: *Variations on Pop Goes the Weasel*; played by the Carnegie Pops Orchestra, conducted by Charles O'Connell. Columbia 10-inch disc 4368-M, price 75c.

▲ Back in September 1938, Fiedler gave us a recording of this somewhat over-elaborated but nonetheless engaging arrangement of an old familiar tune. The piece is diverting on occasion but does not wear too well. Mr. O'Connell tends to take it a bit more seriously than Fiedler but few will deny that he turns in an effective performance. The recording is good, but surprisingly for its age so too is the Fiedler one.

—P.G.

HANDEL-BEECHAM: *The Great Elopement*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor set M- or DM-1093, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ This ballet which Sir Thomas Beecham has made up out of the works of Handel is so transformed in its modern dress that it may perhaps be considered best as a modern score using materials of the eighteenth century master. The work is, therefore, no such easy target for the musical purist as, say, the Bach transcriptions of Stokowski, Schoenberg or Reger. Indeed, however much one may believe in a reverent regard for the composer's intentions, it would be difficult not to be won over by the sheer beauty of the sound which issues from Beecham's orchestra, the infectiousness of his rhythm and the true effectiveness of the orchestration, however far it may be from anything Handel ever had in mind. Perhaps the greatest quality of Sir Thomas as a conductor is the healthiness of everything he does, and since healthiness is also the all-pervading characteristic of Handel's music, this may account for the particular affinity of the conductor for the composer.

The story of *The Great Elopement*, which Sir Thomas himself wrote to go with the music, concerns the elopement of the playwright Sheridan with the daughter of Linley the composer. The music, we are told, is drawn from the following works of Handel: *Rodrigo*, *II Pastor Fido*, *Ariodante*, *II Parnasso in Festa*, *Teseo* and some of the harpsichord suites. As we hear it in this recording this selection is less like the customary suite of eighteenth century dances than the earlier ballets which this conductor has made from Handel's works. The very labeling of the movements suggests this—*The Pump Room*, *The Linleys*, *The Hunting Dance*, *Love Scene*, *The Weary Flunkies*, *The Plot*, *Sarabande*,

Hornpipe, *Beau Nash*, *Second Love Scene*, *In mezzo* and *Jig*. Each is a complete and perfect thing in itself, and there is plenty of contrast, from the tender *Love Scene* to the irreverent suggestion of *Rule, Britannia* in the *Hornpipe*, yet the whole score hangs together.

This is unquestionably a work with the stuff of popularity, and its first recording is its definitive one. The reproduction is up to the very best made in post-war England.

—P.L.M.

KHATCHATURIAN: *Gayne—Ballet Suite*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction Efrem Kurtz. Columbia set M- or MM- 664, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Khachaturian's ballet music seems more honest in its spontaneity and frank theatricalism than his symphonic music. In his piano concerto his use of folk material seems more often than not inappropriate to the symphonic genre and the whole becomes a virtuoso vehicle which after a few hearings leaves one with the feeling that the work is pretentious rather than inspired. The composer's ballet *Gayne*, or *Gayane*—as quoted in some sources, reveals the composer as a particularly happy exponent of theatrical music. The work was first presented in 1942 and won for Khachaturian a prize from Stalin. The scene of the ballet is among the cotton pickers on a collective farm in Soviet Armenia. The name of the work is derived from its heroine. Since the story is given in the notes with the set, it is not necessary to repeat it here. It is necessary, however, to point out that the notes tend to inflate the importance of the composer and his music.

The present suite from the ballet includes dances and other pieces. The former seem to me the more effectively written and the composer's blend of East and West in his musical texture is adroitly handled. Those who like dance suites will undoubtedly find this one appealing; it has rhythmic variety, primitive energy, sentiment, and rich tonal coloring. I have a feeling that the suite would have been more successful cut down to four sides, but there is room for disagreement on this assumption. Mr. Kurtz gives the music a good performance and Columbia has provided excellent reproduction. Indeed, one wonders what the Russians would say to

the realistic quality of this recording in comparison with the studio-boxed reproduction of several excerpts that have come out of the Soviet Union.

—P.H.R.

PROKOFIEFF: *Symphony No. 5, Opus 100*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction of Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M- or DM-1095, five discs, price \$5.85.

▲ Since writing my review of Rodzinski's performance of this work in the January issue I have obtained a score and become better acquainted with this music. My opinions, however, have not altered to any great extent. The long opening movement remains diffuse and its dramatic intent and design are not yet clear to my mind. Curiously, Koussevitzky makes the opening movement seem more of a maze of perplexing thematic combinations than Rodzinski does. It may be due to the more open-hall characteristics of the recording, or it may be owing to Koussevitzky's insistence on inflating the brasses and woodwinds and by so doing, in my estimation, making secondary themes stand out more strongly than they should. Listening several times to both sets, I find a more mellow and better balanced orchestral sound in the Rodzinski set, which more especially in the opening *Andante*, but also in part in the long slow movement, makes smoother continuity. It may be in the long run that the logic of the composer's intentions will be more quickly clarified by the dissecting mind of Koussevitzky, but the gauntless of the instrumentation on occasion seems to me as much a disservice to Prokofieff as, what I would term, the over-clarification of inner line. Following the score, I find the details of the music are often more clearly defined by Koussevitzky and in the ingenious scherzo and the finale his etching of line and instrumentation reveals greater virtuosic sweep but Rodzinski's more lyrical treatment has greater appeal. The finale is unquestionably the best movement in the work—a sure-fire ending, as I noted before—which can hardly fail to send a lot of listeners home with the firm conviction that they have heard a work of greater importance than the more discerning will be willing to concede.

It is my firm conviction that had this work been signed by an unknown name it would not have enjoyed the enthusiastic pub-

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\$1.95* *Guglielmo Tell*—*O muto asil*

The following are now rare records already deleted from Victor and English H.M.V. catalogues:

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in A major, Op. 69*; Casals and Schulhof. Discs DB1417/19 — \$7.88* with album.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in G major, Op. 30, No. 3*; Rachmaninoff and Kreisler. Discs DB1463/64 — \$5.25* with album.

BLOCH: *Quintet for piano and strings*; A. Casella and the Pro Arte Quartet. Discs DB1882/85 — \$10.50* with album.

MONTEMEZZI: *L'Amore dei tre Re—Prelude*; Covent Garden Orch., conducted by Bellezza. Disc S10224 — \$2.00*.

PUCCINI: *Turandot*—*Gira la cote and O giovanetto* (Marcia funebre) Chorus and Orch. of Covent Garden, Bellezza. Disc S10001 — \$2.00*.

PUCCINI: *Suor Angelica*—*Intermezzo* and MASCAGNI: *Iris*—*Danze* Disc S10223 — \$2.00*.

SCHUBERT: *Moments Musicaux, Op. 94* (Complete) Artur Schnabel—piano. Discs DB3358/60 — \$7.99*.

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lic reception which has been bestowed upon it.

Choice of the two sets will be largely personal. In my estimation, Rodzinski's is one of the most impressively defined performances he has done for the phonograph. If he does not point up or exploit its dramatic potentialities as markedly on occasion as Koussevitzky, he does outline them with cogent sensibility. I think the sound of the orchestras in reproduction may well be a deciding point with many listeners, and there is a great deal to be said for the more mellow quality of the Philharmonic Symphony.

—P.H.R.

PURCELL: *The Gordian Knot Untied*: played by the Saidenberg Little Symphony, direction of Daniel Saidenberg. Concert Hall Society album No. 3, two 10-inch discs. Limited Edition.

BARBER: *The Capricorn Concerto, Opus 21*; played by Saidenberg Little Symphony (Julius Baker—flute, Harry Freistadt—trumpet, Mitchell Miller—oboe), direction of Daniel Saidenberg. Concert Hall Society album No. 4, two discs. Limited Edition.

▲ These sets constitute the third release of the Concert Hall Society for its subscribers. It is a pity that these albums are not available to the general public, for there are too few chamber orchestral recordings to be had and these are musically of unusual interest. Barber's *Capricorn Suite* (named after his country house near Mt. Kisco, N.Y.) is in the concerto grosso style—a sort of modern *Brandenburg Concerto* in which the three wind instruments are pitted against the strings. The work was written especially for the Saidenberg Little Symphony. There is some ingenious workmanship in this score but not all of the melodic material is distinguished enough to sustain a remembered profile. On the whole, I think things have been very capably calculated and the instrumentation admirably handled, but I feel its melodic substance is less interesting than what the composer does with it. This type of music deserves rehearing, however, I am sure once one becomes familiar with its pattern and its developmental structure for which the melodies were the motive its appeal will be established. Saidenberg's performance has its musical virtues but I do

not think the recording is as vital or resonant as it should have been. This is typical studio recording—tonally dry and not always ideally balanced giving one the feeling that one is not hearing an unfamiliar work under the most favorable circumstances.

The Purcell score fares better in reproduction, but again I would have liked a more enlivening room resonance behind the orchestra. Of *The Gordian Knot Untied*, a comedy, very little is known and only Purcell's incidental music survives. It is well, however, that this suite exists for it contains some especially heart-warming music. The overture is a fine piece which opens with a poetic earnestness that gives way to a dramatic, fugal allegro of impelling energy. It is followed by an attractively harmonized Rondeau Minuet that Gluck might have written. Three dance movements—an Air, a Minuet and a Jig—bring the work to a close in the typical carefree manner of the period. The Jig is of interest because Purcell makes use of the popular tune *Lilliburlero* as its bass. Mr. Saidenberg's interpretation of this music shows an understanding of the classicism of its mood and one feels that his performance has been affectionately shaped. The only criticism I would make is that a harpsichord should have been included in the ensemble.

—P.H.R.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 4 in A minor, Opus 63*; played by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M- or MM-665, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ I am glad to see Columbia reviving interest in Sibelius. Among 20th century symphonies, this one remains one of the most erudite, sober and contemplative. I have always regarded it as a great score, and I can see no reason to alter my opinions in the face of considerable disparagement of the composer which has lately been fashionable. Curiously, the disparagement of Sibelius has been lead by several of our own composers, who despite the fact that they pursue a similar pattern of autogenous composition nevertheless point a finger of scorn at him. Too, with all the Russian bally-ho about Shostakovich, Sibelius has fallen under a cloud in recent years. Perhaps this set may alter that condition, I sincerely hope so, for there is more compelling artistic imagination in

this work than any one of the Shostakovich ones I know.

There have been two other performances of this work on records—(both issued by Victor) one by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra dating from 1932 and the other by Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra dating from 1938. Of these, my preference has always been for the Beecham. Naturally, the present recording has the edge on the others, but that edge is not as much as I should have expected in these times. Columbia's dynamic range is wider, and on the *pianissimo* side more realistically handled than in the Beecham set, but I find the *fortissimi* lacking in essential force. From this aspect the Beecham set still remains impressive, and it often reveals a clarity of woodwind line which is not as apparent in the present recording. Although Beecham's reading is often a more searching one than Rodzinski's, the latter nonetheless gives an unusually impressive performance—one that is marked by artistic taste and acumen. It

is obvious that the work was carefully prepared and rehearsed. The same warm quality of orchestral tone, noted in Rodzinski's Prokofieff *Fifth*, prevails here. —P.H.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW: *Russian Easter Overture, Opus 36*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set X- or MX-267, two discs, price \$2.85.

▲ The last time we had a recording of this work was the Easter Season of 1943; the conductor was Stokowski and the orchestra the NBC Symphony. Stokowski with a flair for theatrics introduced a bass singer instead of the trombone solo in the chant-like recitative section. Although this procedure was dramatically effective, I must say in subsequent performances I found the singer an intruder in an essentially instrumental work. Ormandy wisely plays the score as it was written and gives us a fine performance in which the whirling drama is adroitly handled and the richly colored orchestration



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ARTUR RUBINSTEIN: Forgotten Waltz—Liszt; The Prophet Bird—Schumann. 10-1272, 75¢.



ROBERT SHAW: Bach Cantata No. 4, Christ lag in Todesbanden. Red Seal Album M/DM-1096, \$3.75.



FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN: Prayers And Poems—Spellman. Album M-1097, \$3.85.

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is exploited without any of the exaggerations that Stokowski favors. The recording is good with an unusually fine semblance of dynamic realism.

Rimsky-Korsakow tells us that he sought to reproduce in this overture the "legendary and heathen side of the Easter holiday", the "transition from the gloomy and mysterious evening of Passion Saturday to the unbridled pagan-religious merry-making on the morn of Easter Sunday". The program is drawn from the Sixty-Seventh Psalm and the Resurrection scene in the Gospel according to St. Mark. It closes with the exultant Resurrexit theme. It has always seemed to me that what Rimsky-Korsakow did for the Festival of Bagdad, in *Sheherazade*, he does here for the Russian Easter service.—P.H.R.

STRAVINSKY: *Fire Works*; and FAURÉ: *Pelléas et Mélisande: Sicilienne*; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Désiré Defauw. Victor disc 11-9447, price \$1.00.

▲Stravinsky's own recent performance of *The Firebird* (Columbia M-653) contains his *Fire Works* as a filler, and in that recording the playing is both authentic and effective. The same can hardly be said for this presentation by Defauw which is quite unsubtle and almost too brilliant. Certainly the recording has great clarity and a wide range of frequencies and dynamics, yet the impression it leaves is far less vivid and convincing than that of the composer's performance. The Fauré *Sicilienne* is part of the *Pelléas* suite which was unhappily left out of the Koussevitzky recording (Victor M-941) in order to make room for Rimski-Korsakoff's *Dubinushka*. Unfortunately this new record hardly matches the gentle power of the Boston performance. To begin with, by adopting too fast a tempo Defauw has eliminated the otherworldly quality which is the essence of Fauré's music, and he fails to realize the beauty of the sobbing inner voices. For all its ancient and outmoded reproduction the old set made by Albert Wolff with the Berlin Philharmonic (Polydor 66-725-26) still has more atmosphere than this modern and technically excellent disc.

—P.L.M.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Waltz and Polonaise* from *Eugen Onegin*; played by the Hallé Orchestra, direction of Malcom Sargent. Colum-

bia disc 71929-D, price \$1.00.

▲The comments on Sir Thomas Beecham's recording of these excerpts (Victor disc 11-9421) made in our February issue prevail here. Neither of these pieces emerge from the operatic action in a favorable manner. Mr. Sargent gives them a more forthright treatment than Sir Thomas which I am rather inclined to feel is preferable under the circumstances. The recording is good.

—P.H.R.

Concerto

BRAHMS: *Concerto in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 15*; played by Rudolf Serkin with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner, Conductor. Columbia Set M- or MM-652, 6 discs, price \$6.85.

▲With this recording the *D Minor Piano Concerto* makes its initial appearance in the Columbia catalogue. It had been recorded on two previous occasions, both under the Victor imprimatur, first by Wilhelm Bachaus, Sir Adrian Boult and the B.B.C. Symphony, and several years later by Artur Schnabel, George Szell and the London Philharmonic. The former, withdrawn from the catalogue, was by far the better of the two sets in every way. Fortunately the present recording partially fills the gap left by this withdrawal. Although Serkin does not quite measure up to Bachaus at the height of his powers (when his recording was made), Serkin's traversal of the piano part is technically and musically above reproach, and is far ahead of the mannered interpretation to be found in the Schnabel recording, which unfortunately has gained wide circulation. Too, Reiner invests the orchestral part with much more resiliency and vitality than did Boult and Szell, and the recording greatly surpasses those of the earlier sets.

Existing in the form of a sonata for two pianos as early as 1854, this work was then turned into a symphony; but it is not clear whether it was completed in that form. Suffice to say that it gave Brahms much trouble. He had had no experience in writing for the orchestra, and he wrote to Clara Schumann that he was not satisfied with it. So he recast it entirely in the form in which it has come down to us, completing it in

1858. Its first performances in Hanover and Leipzig were coldly received, in fact in the latter city it was a complete fiasco. The concerto was written at a time when virtuosity was worshipped for its own sake, and few there were who could fathom what Brahms was driving at in writing a concerto that was (so they said) austere, forbidding unpianistic. The critics found the orchestration "lustreless", "weak", and the piano writing "thick", utterly oblivious to the fact that the garb in which Brahms presented his thoughts was entirely appropriate to the subject matter. We know better to-day. Brahms suppressed all display of technical virtuosity (although the piano part is very difficult nevertheless), and the soloist and orchestra are of equal importance. This was one of the first concertos so conceived, therefore it was with difficulty that the concerto made its way. Little wonder that early audiences, accustomed to facile, brilliant and showy concertos, were perplexed when hearing this one, for it makes demands as regards intellectual content, and the hearer must meet the composer more than half way.

However, this is profound and deeply moving music all the time; Promethean, if you will. There is terrible despair, passion and revolt in the opening movement, magnificently unrestrained, rugged and militant. The wonderful slow movement, devout, gentle and serene, is in complete contrast. Here Brahms suffuses the music with a romantic sweetness that goes straight to the heart of the listener. The final movement, slightly Hungarian-gipsy in spirit, is vigorous and buoyant, and not without a certain liveliness, without being at any time superficial.

This concerto is to-day widely known and loved, despite the bad start that it got off to. Though not as frequently performed as its companion piece in B-Flat, it is, in the eyes of many musicians, fully its equal in emotional content. The present recording should do much to cause its popularity to approach that concerto in public esteem. —H.S.G.

PROKOFIEFF: *Concerto No. 3 in C major* (*Op. 26*); played and conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra. Columbia set M- or MM-667, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ For some reason this concerto does not wear too well with me. Although it is highly

spoken of by most Prokofieff admirers, I find the work a little superficial, judged by the standards of the *First Violin Concerto* and other works of that period. Perhaps it is the unhappy juxtaposition of styles: the mechanistic flavor of the early twenties coupled to broad themes reminiscent of Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky. Which is not to imply that the music does not have its exciting moments, for various sections are highly imaginative, even if complete artistic unity is absent.

Prokofieff himself has recorded the work with Coppola and the London Symphony in a version that now is mechanically outdated. Now we have Mitropoulos in a dual capacity of conductor and pianist, something which has not been done on records for some time. Mitropoulos had accomplished the same feat in the same concerto with the New York Philharmonic, some years back, though it was not recorded. At the time, it impressed as an exceptional tour de force. This piano part is very difficult technically, and it is also rhythmically complicated. So is the orchestral accompaniment, and one's hat goes off to the man who dares to couple the two elements. Mitropoulos is not well known as a pianist, but is reputed to be one of Buson's last pupils, one with a brilliant career ahead of him had he continued work on the instrument.

However, a tour de force is not necessarily the ultimate in music making. One feels the strain here, even though the piano part is more or less successfully handled. A few moments of sloppy pianism, as in the passage in thirds toward the end of the last side, betray the fact that Mitropoulos may

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have been a little behind in his practicing. That is relatively unimportant, though; more to the point is the lack of balance between piano and orchestra, the occasional inadequacies in the accompaniment, and the inferior qualities of the reproduction.

As I remember the Prokofieff version, there was less sound and fury, more of an inner meaning. Both pianists are of the percussive school, which may be ideal for this particular work, but Mitropoulos is more brittle and perfunctory, playing much of the passage work so that it emerges without any particular significance. Impressive as some of his work might be, it would have been much better had another pianist been chosen for the solo part, leaving Mitropoulos to confine his energies to orchestral coordination.

The recording is not too good. Little warmth is present in the piano tone, and there could have been much more resonance in the orchestra. Nor is there much differentiation in instrumentation. Take side 4, where the piano is heard but the orchestra is a rather vague blur behind it, with indistinct tonal qualities. This is hardly one of Mitropoulos' better efforts, nor one of Columbia's.

—H.C.S.

Keyboard

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 (Pathétique)*; played by Artur Rubinstein (piano). Victor set M- or DM-1102, two discs, price \$2.85.

▲ After many *Pathétique*-less years, the record companies have seen fit to issue three within the last twelve months—one by Erno Balogh, one by Serkin, and the present Rubinstein version. The Balogh version was not too serviceable, however, if for recording reasons alone, while Serkin's, as pointed out in last December's review, tended to be monochromatic. Thus a *Pathétique* was needed, and Rubinstein does much toward filling the gap permanently.

This sonata can be played in several manners. There is the German *kappelmeister* way of interpretation which stresses the classic elements in a pure, severe approach. At the opposite pole, there are the pianists who

consider the work romantic music, and play it accordingly. Serkin is one of the former, Rubinstein the latter. His is a romantic reading that avoids the pedanticism of Serkin without going into excess color. (The latter is a point with which many may take issue; there is considerable feeling in some quarters against Rubinstein as a Beethoven player.)

Aided by excellent recording—resonant bass, firm treble—Rubinstein gives a warm reading. He is inclined to stress the louder moments, but one feels that the force involved is a natural expression of the pianist's exuberance. But all is not display. Rubinstein, for instance, does not rush the last movement the way so many of his colleagues do. He takes a sensible tempo and adheres to it, thus presenting the music with more dignity than it normally possesses. I have no hesitation recommending the set. It might be added, as Mr. Reed indicated, that this work is not one of Beethoven's more important sonatas. It is a good introduction, but the purchaser should also investigate the *Appassionata*, *Waldstein*, and any after Op. 78.

—H.C.S.

CHOPIN: Waltzes—in A flat, Opus 34, No. 1; in A flat, Opus 64, No. 3; in D flat, Opus 64, No. 1; in A Minor, Opus 34, No. 2; in E flat, Opus 18; in F major, Opus 34, No. 3; in C sharp minor, Opus 64, No. 2; played by Jacques Abram (piano) Musicraft set 76, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ The recording is tonally agreeable but suggesting a studio lacking in essential enlivening resonance. The surfaces here are better than many of the piano records we have heard recently.

Mr Abrams is a young pianist with definite ideas of his own on the interpretation of Chopin. He is singularly erratic in matters of tempi and phrasing, and there is little elegance or symmetry in his conception of these pieces. Technically, the pianist is adept, but one asks more than technique in the music of Chopin; what is needed is a refinement of style and a rhythmic flow that is always gracious. If Mr. Abram's arbitrary spurts of tempi and frequent jerkiness of line are his ideas of *rubato* he errs in his definition of that all too frequently misunderstood word. Both Cortot and Brail-

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owsky have given better accounts of these waltzes on records.

—P.H.R.

ETUDES: *Etude in F major, Opus 10, No. 8* (Chopin); *Etude in C minor, Opus 33, No. 2* (Rachmaninoff); *Etude in F major, Opus 104, No. 2* (Mendelssohn); *Etude in D flat major, Opus 8, No. 10* (Scriabin); *Etude (The Top) Allegro, Opus 56, No. 10* (Toch); *Forest Murmurs—Etude de Concert* (Liszt); *Etude, Opus 65, No. 2* (Scriabin); *Etude pour les degrés chromatiques* and *Etude pour les cinq doigts d'après Czerny* (Debussy); played by Jakob Gimpel (piano). Vox Set 164, four 10-inch discs, price \$4.75.

▲ Mr. Gimpel's style is clean and crisp but his use of the pedal is almost too discreet for its own good. One admires his immaculate finger work, his tonal symmetry, and precise phrasing, but the unrelieved black and white of his playing precludes a much needed emotionalism in many of these compositions. I can imagine a student acquiring some pointers on technique but for expressive qualities I feel he would look elsewhere. Gimpel's Chopin is singularly dry, his Rachmaninoff and Liszt lack a warmth of feeling, yet all are played with an exacting musical taste. The pianist's impeccable technique stands him in good stead in the Mendelssohn, the Scriabin, the Toch, and the Debussy pieces. Several of these are new to records and very welcome. Mr. Gimpel made the Debussy études once for Columbia (disc 17305-D, issued in April 1942). His performance of the two Scriabin works suggest no use of the damper pedal which the composer and his pupils (the late Katherine Ruth Heyman, for example) employed to obtain a diffuse coloring. The Scriabin *D flat Etude* is a study in thirds, and familiar to many in the transcription for violin which Szegedi played on record (Columbia 68922-D). The *Opus 65* étude is a study in sevenths and has previously been recorded by Samuel Jaffe (Paraclete disc 1); I greatly prefer Mr. Gimpel's performance here. I am pleased to see even a short work by Ernst Toch who knows how, as one writer has said, "to scamper merrily over the keyboard". The recording is quite satisfactory, but the tonal brittleness of the pianist does not always make for smooth re-

sults in the upper parts of the keyboard.

—P.H.R.

LISZT: *Valse Oubliée*; and **SCHUMANN:** *Vogel als Prophet*; played by Artur Rubinstein (piano). Victor ten-inch disc 10-1272 price 75c.

▲ No modern version of either of these pieces is present in the catalogues. Columbia lists an old *Valse Oubliée* played by Sauer, but that dates back many years. Both works still are heard with moderate frequency in the concert hall, especially the Liszt, which generally pops up as an encore. It sounds a bit old-fashioned today, with its salon-like theme and typically Lisztain embroidery. The Schumann piece, on the other hand, is more genuine music. It is hard to tell what was in its composer's mind during composition. As is well known, Schumann usually composed his pieces first and only then named them. Here it was the plaintive upward jumps that suggested the title—*Bird as Prophet*—to him. It is a moody work, imaginative and ever-appealing.

Rubinstein plays both directly. The Liszt can stand the abandon he brings to it, but perhaps a little more color, delicacy and a quieter effect would have been more apposite in it and also in *Vogel als Prophet*. It is difficult to define exactly what is missing in the latter; the pianist plays the notes as written, but in this opinion some of the magical effect is missing. The recording is excellent.

—H.C.S.

SCARLATTI: *Sonatas in G major, L. 232; in C major, L. 205; in E major, L. 257; in D major, L. 461; in F major, L. 433; in E major, L. 23; in F major, L. 479; in D major, L. 413; in D major, L. 463*; played by Sylvia Marlowe (harpsichord). Musicraft set 72, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Miss Marlowe, we are told, has been interested in the music of Domenico Scarlatti since her childhood. This is not hard to believe for one feels hearing her play these 18th-century pieces that they are very alive and vital to her. She gives them sparkling and zestful performances, and contrasts the various moods of the composer in a wholly persuasive manner. I have heard Miss Marlowe perform over the air and in public both music of early times and jazz, and I have always been fascinated with her ability to

identify herself with both schools. It seems to me the microphone placement on the air has been kinder to the player's tone, for here the reproduction seems to over-amplify her instrument and some of the charm of her playing is lost. In the loud passages, her instrument sounds more wiry and twangy than I ever remember it on the air or in the concert hall. If one can get clarity of tone without placing one's volume control too high, one will find the reproduction pleasanter but some of the vitality of the lady's playing may be lost. It is a mistake to over-amplify the harpsichord, because the forceful playing of the performer tends to become too ponderous and heavy-handed. However, I am told there are two schools of thought on this, since many listeners like the harpsichord to compete with the piano.

—P.H.R.

Instrumental

A FLAMENCO CONCERT: *Tanger Danza Amora; Malaguena (Lecuona); Variaciones Clásicas de Farracus; Aires de Cadiz Solea; Grandinas; Gran Jota de Tarrega;* played by Sacicas (guitar). Keynote album K-134, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.00.

The music of the Spanish gypsies is rhythmically fascinating and colorful. Its improvisatory lines are of Oriental influence. People who have travelled in Spain inevitably speak of the alluring music that the Spanish gypsies play. It has been said that it is impossible to define Spanish music (and certainly this remains true of the folk music) anymore than it is possible to depict Spanish character in the different personalities of the different provinces.

I find these pieces, most of which are of folk origin, fascinating to listen to; they are full of rhythmic excitement. Sacicas is a virtuoso player of no mean ability. His tone is vibrant and full, and under his adept fingers the strings of his instrument do strange and engaging things. His technique is prodigious. He is said to be the son of a gypsy guitar player and to have learned his art from the beggars on the streets of his native town in Spain. There is a boldness and vigor in his playing, a down-to-earth quality. He lacks the subtlety of line that

Segovia attains, but on his own he is nonetheless a gifted artist—an artist, I would say, of the people.

Keynote has given him good recording.

—P.G.

HEBREW FOLK MELODIES: *Hebrew Melody* (arr. Achron and Fleishman); *Artzah-Alinu* and *Nigun-Bialik* (Horras) (Arr. Fleischman); *Hasidic Dance* (Olshansky); *Havdolo* (Sholom Secundo); *Pakad Adoshem* and *Kumah-Echa* (arr. Fleischman); *V'Taher Li Ba Nu* (Sabbath Melody) and *Hava Nagilah* (arr. Fleischman); played by the Palestinian String Quartet. DISC Set 902, three discs, price \$4.72 (with tax).

▲ This album is recommended for its unusual treatment of traditional music and the well coordinated and expressive playing of the ensemble. The melodies here are traditional Hebrew and Palestinian ones. The latter proved of most immediate appeal to this reviewer, especially the dance-like pieces. Hebrew melody tends to be plaintive and frequently lamentative in quality, and several of the pieces are almost unpleasantly mournful in character. Although one does not think of music like this in arrangement for the string quartet, it must be said the medium proves a most effective one for the music and the arrangements are well contrived. The recording of the studio variety is satisfactorily accomplished.

—P.H.R.

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SELECTIONS from Warner Bros. Film *Humoresque*: *Humoresque* (Dvorak-arr. Waxman) *Flight of the Bumble Bee* (Rimsky-Korsakow—arr. Waxman); *Tristan and Isolde—Excerpts* (Wagner-arr. Waxman); *Zigeunerweisen* (Sarasate); *Carmen Fantasy* (Büet—arr. Sarasate and Waxman); Isaac Stern (violin), Oscar Levant (piano in the *Tristan*), and Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Franz Waxman. Columbia album M- or MM-657, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ In engaging the violinist, Isaac Stern, to play the violin solos for John Garfield behind the scenes in the new film, *Humoresque*, Hollywood chose one of the most talented young virtuosos now before the public. Although the better part of this album would not appeal to me, I cannot help but feel that Hollywood has done Mr. Stern a good service, for this set—and the picture—will do much to popularize and establish him with the multitudes.

Since everything in Hollywood has to be glamorized, we find most of the material he has been given to play considerably dressed up. Dvorak's simple and unpretentious little piano piece, *Humoresque*, is inflated to symphonic proportions. The arrangement of music from Wagner's *Tristan* is one of those musical indiscretions that could only come out of Hollywood. Out of the whole album only one work, Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* or *Gypsy Airs* comes to us in its original form. Stern plays it with artistic intelligence; indeed, his performance competes with any existent version on records. The *Carmen Fantasy* is the same, I believe, that Heifetz played last month, originally a transcription of Sarasate which Mr. Waxman dressed up for the occasion of this picture. I did not know this fact last month.

The recording is excellent throughout the set, and Mr. Waxman proves himself a competent conductor and—accepting the Hollywood pattern—an ingenious arranger.

—P.G.

VOLIN RECITAL: *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* (Tartini—arr. Francescatti); *Polka* from *The Age of Gold* (Shostakovich—arr. Grunes); *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* (Debussy—arr. Hartman); *Minuet Bird* (Schumann—arr. Heifetz); *Caprice in A minor* (Wieniawski); played

by Zino Francescatti (violin) with Max Lanner at the piano. Columbia 10-inch set M-660, three discs, price \$3.00.

▲ Among contemporary violinists, Mr. Francescatti is a violinist with considerable accomplishments in matters of tone and technique. He can play with a brilliance and fire, with a virtuoso sweep that is momentarily dazzling, and he can produce a beautifully subdued tone, all of which suggests a dual personality. After the technical show of Shostakovich's *Polka*, his playing of the Debussy prelude—*The Maid with the Flaxen Hair*—suggested the dual personality to me. In the one, the violinist was completely objective and the showman, in the other he was subjective and the poet. His performance of this Debussy piece is among the most persuasive I have heard from any violinist.

As a violin recital, this one is open to criticism, for too many of the pieces are arrangements, and—let it be noted—not the most successful ones for the violin. Thus, Debussy's *Minstrels* and Schumann's *The Prophet Bird* are far more enjoyable in their pianistic medium. One suspects that Francescatti chose this program to show off his ability as a performer, for each of these pieces presents varied and different problems which he handles in a highly expert manner. It would have more interesting to have the violinist in music of greater perspective and depth, but there is no reason that an artist should not select music "for the intrinsic enjoyment that it contains", as the annotator remarks here.

Mr. Lanner proves himself a competent and sympathetic accompanist, and the recording is capably handled.

—P.H.R.

Drama & Poetry

SHAKESPEARE: *G.I. Hamlet* (Excerpts); recited by Maurice Evans. Columbia Masterworks Set MM651, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ This album is third-rate Evans, but it should be granted at the outset that third-rate Evans is still first-rate recitation, so clearly do the creamy tones of our first actor rise to the top of a criterion based on the

milky falsettoes with which your run-of-the-dairy actor chews the Shakespearian cud. Like Roxanne, we ask for cream, while Cyrano and Hamlets as well as Christians give us condensed milk.

Included in this album are six of Hamlet's great speeches. Columbia's earlier *Hamlet* album (MM-340) shows us what a grace was seated in Evans' voice then and what a fall from grace is in the current counterfeit presentment. Hyperion's curls, in over-strenuously avoiding the epithet "long-hair", have grown a little ragged. That voice like Mars' to threaten and command" seems to have lost some of its resonant ferocity, its exuberant swell, its ringing excitement in discovering new vowels to conquer. The range of vocal magnificence has been definitely foreshortened by the new or G.I. perspective of the part. In the earlier set *O What a Rogue and Peasant Slave* (Act II-2) swept in resounding baritones through "bloody, bawdy villain", leapt to a tenor-topping "O Vengeance" and fell as a giant to the muted "Swounds".

Once the voice which framed "I do not know why yet I live" took little running steps along "I do not know", gathered momentum with "yet I" and at the edge of "live" hurtled heroically out into spacelessness and timelessness. Then defying gravity with a gymnastic wit, it turned around in mid-air and returned to collect the negligible balance of the phrase... "to say this thing's to do". In the present recording the voice does not so surely phrase the quick from the dead, nor does the herald Mercury new-light upon a nearby heaven-kissing hill to watch the unfolding of the leap. The mere jump which remains virtually any competent actor could take in his stride.

When Munden made his farewell curtain speech, Lamb mourned that his favorite actor turned to written notes and *read* of "heartfelt recollections" and "indelible impressions". In the *To be or not to be* passage (Act III-1) Evans should not read "Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished" as if the reference were to the end of a rubber of bridge instead of to the end of an inelastic world. To mute the thought, as he does in both albums, were perhaps a successful subtlety did not a couple of pious intonations—rare in this actor—creep in to

wreak the usual havoc of the sententious returning with "rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of". This unwonted archness also makes a kind of calamity of "so-long life". Or possibly it is his passionate and impressive regard for the lamb which shorts this spondee.

In the two selections original with this set (*Advice to the Players*, Act III-2, and *Ghost Scene*, Act I-5) the set finds a more satisfactory *raison-d'être*. By reading the Ghost's lines himself, as well as those of Hamlet, Evans partially compensates for the incomparably mawkish reading of them which scarred the G.I. stage production last Spring. Indeed, only Evans could make unqualified assonance of "seeming-virtuous queen". And when he cries "O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?" there returns the ghost of his former flair, his essential genius, for vocal excitement.

One has the impression that basically Evans' voice is as vibrant as ever, that the familiarity begot of nearly seven hundred successive performances of an exacting role has quite understandably bred disinterest if not contempt. Further, he is "talking down" not only in his range but in his point of view. What is caviare to the general is also caviare to the G.I. And chances are the latter could muster up more of an appetite. If the *Hamlet* recipe were to be doctored at all, probably the G.I. would prefer to have

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an especially stinging emphasis boil over from "the insolence of office" in the *To be or not to be* soliloquy, scalding any generals to whom it might apply. —Robert D. Olson

SHAKESPEARE: *Fun with Mister Shakespeare*, "The Comedy of Errors" adapted by Beauvais Fox; narrated by Charles Coburn and cast headed by Romney Brent. Victor set Y-608, 2 discs, price \$2.85.

▲ Surely the term *non-breakable* appears on this blend of baby and double talk less as an ad than as an advice, warning the irate youngster at whom it is aimed that any physical attempts to revenge himself on the fond relative who with this boring album hoped to endear him to Shakespeare have been obviated by the research engineers of RCA Victor. Hardly an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, it is no more than a pedestrian plot synopsis freighted with a few lines of Shakespearian dialogue. Its only humor is the shaggy-dog variety wrung from the intentionally involved repetitions of the *dramatis personae*—Antipholus of Ephesus, Antipholus of Syracuse, Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse. Never a fast man with a sibilant, Mr. Coburn derives too excessive a delight from the pyramiding perplexities of plot and pronunciation. Give this set to your child and you give him exactly what he may have wanted in the way of an excuse for creeping like a snail unwillingly to Shakespeare. —R.D.O.

DUMAS: *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas; adapted and directed by Ralph Rose with Errol Flynn and supporting cast. Columbia masterworks set MM-659, 8 sides, price \$4.85.

▲ The children whom this dramatized incident of the Queen's Necklace is designed to entertain will doubtless not object that its adaptation is necessarily free, its relation to Dumas necessarily remote, its action necessarily restricted to sound effects and post-mortem description. Vigorously narrated by Mr. Flynn and competently adapted by Mr. Rose, the album is a good shot at the one form of drama which cannot be considered fair game for records—swordplay. —R.D.O.

SPELLMAN: *Prayers and Poems*; a reading of his own poems by Francis Cardinal Spellman. Victor set M-1097, 3 discs, price \$3.85.

▲ The poet's eye, though glancing frequently, in this album, from earth to heaven, doth not in a fine frenzy roll. Cardinal Spellman exhibits a poetical weapon of the temper of George Eliot and the Merediths rather than of William Blake and the Rossettis. His sturdy style is too forthright and pellucid for the mystical adventure, the suggestive imagery, the molten compression which distinguish the poetic gift from the prose. As rhythmic prose, predominantly iambic, these selections are clearly composed and transparently read. And the cherished sentiments they cheerfully reaffirm on themes sacred to the Church, to the Nation and to the theological tradition in Art will bring a still-renewable comfort to the spiritually bereft. One line from the selection *No Greater Love*, dealing with the eternal triumph of spirit over mind and body, rises above the casuistical prose of lines like "In this sense only speak they true" to the truly poetic condition of a line like "The night breeze moves above our dead tonight". Rime is a secular dross inessential to poetry and inimical to religious poetry. Cardinal Spellman does not, as many of our clergy do when they wax poetical or take to the air, burst into the primrose dalliance of blooming rime and hothouse syntax but rather quietly exposes a thorny war-torn world to the sight and sound of a stately man sewing his simple seeds of faith in the closed garden of an ordered mind. The evangelical fervor he eschews, though it mean the birth of faith for some, can mean the death of poetry for others. —R.D.O.

Voice

BACH: *Cantata no. 4: Christ lag in Todesbanden*; sung by the RCA Victor Chorale and orchestra, direction of Robert Shaw. Victor set M- or DM-1096, four 10-inch discs, \$3.75.

▲ A new recording of a Bach cantata will always be good news, and we have a right to look for rather better than average things

when the performance is led by Robert Shaw. And though this set is not without its disappointments it can be set down as one of the most worthwhile of recent releases. This Easter cantata is a particularly lovely one and has long been cherished by collectors in a recording (sung in Catalonian) by the Orfeó Català of Barcelona (Victor M-120). Even if it were possible to obtain that set today this new one would have in its favor far superior recording and the fact that it presents the work in its original German text. On the other hand there is a particular charm in the sound of boys' voices, and many have admired this in the Spanish set. That Mr. Shaw's Chorale makes a fine and impressive sound is certainly no news, and we have come to expect clarity in their singing of contrapuntal passages. This we certainly get in the opening chorus, though somewhat to the detriment of the orchestra. If the conductor has not probed the depths of the mystery expressed in the first section he gives the *hallelujahs* with proper spirit and sweep. I was a little disturbed by the ritard in which he indulges at the end of each record side whether or not this coincides with the close of the movement. And in this work the conductor follows what seems to be becoming some kind of tradition in having the solo parts sung by the sections of the chorus. The last two previous recordings of Bach cantatas also made use of this device—*Cantata no. 78* sung by the Bethlehem Bach Choir (Victor M-1045) in which a soprano-alto duet was treated in this manner, and *Cantata 106* by the Radcliffe and Harvard Glee Clubs (Technichord T-6) in which there are no soloists used. In *Christ lag in Todesbanden* there seems to be some justification for this procedure in the fact that all of the solos (which are variations on the chorale melody) want good positive delivery and perhaps more lung power than most solo singers can provide. But this advantage is counteracted by the loss of contrast. Finally the recording seems to me rather over-brilliant, though this can be corrected by judicious use of the tone control. But with all these reservations I have enjoyed hearing this set. Such is the beauty of the music that it could withstand a far less competent performance.

—P.L.M.

BRITTON: Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Opus 32; Peter Pears (tenor), Dennis Brian (horn), and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, direction of Benjamin Britten. Decca FFRR set Ed- or EDA-7, three discs, price \$7.00.

▲ Here is an unusual novelty by one of England's most talented contemporary composers. The work is unusual in that it takes poetic texts from several authors—Cotten, Tennyson, Blake, Jonson, Keats, etc.—and weaves them all into a poetic continuity that gives the work the characteristics of a song cycle not unreminiscent of Mahler as Irving Kolodin noted in his review recently. I think the immediate appeal of this work is found in the finely cultured art of Peter Pears and the musicianly playing of Dennis Brian. Pears has an unusually easy high range and Britten undoubtedly wrote the work with his voice in mind. Other less gifted artists could easily permit the opus to fall apart, especially a tenor that found the tessitura of the songs difficult to hide vocal strain. Pears at no time leaves us with the impression that the vocal line is too difficult and his diction is always clear and effortless.

Britten, although a modernist in his harmonic treatment, reveals an uncanny gift for musical sensibility in his settings of the poems. To be sure, there are moments in the music in which one feels the emotion is not wholly persuasive, that the musical content is more cerebral than felt. The final

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song—a setting of Keat's lovely sonnet, O soft embalmer of the still midnight—is a case in point; it is not a poem which lends itself too well to musical treatment. The opening *Pastoral* of Cotten and the anonymous, 15th-century *Dirge* are challenges to any artist, and the latter with all its cumulative drama is nonetheless somewhat diffuse. The setting of Tennyson's *The splendor falls on castle walls*, the Blake *Elegy*, and the Jonson *Hymn* are fine examples of a keenly penetrating musical mind. The horn opens and closes the cycle with a beautifully conceived poetic sequence which sets the scene and gently draws the curtain on the work.

The recording is on the whole excellently achieved, the lovely quality of the French horn and Mr. Pears' voice are realistically conveyed, but there is some diffusion in the string ensemble at times, which is due to a different microphone placement than is employed in domestic recordings. Moreover, the dynamics are not as successfully handled as we have them in this country, for often the pianissimo passages are at a *mezzo forte* level. However, when all is said and done, I think the set is one of the most important modern contributions of its kind to reach records, and I cannot help but feel that repeated hearings will prove enjoyable and give more meaning to each song and the work as a whole.

—P.H.R.

DEL RIEGO: *Homing*; Nevin: *The Rosary*; TATE: *Somewhere a Voice is Calling*; CADMAN: *At Dawning*; RASBACH: *Trees*; STULTS: *The Sweetest Story Ever Told*; BARTLETT: *A Dream*; MOLLOY: *Love's Old Sweet Song*; sung by Risë Stevens (mezzo-soprano), with orchestra conducted by Sylvan Shulman. (Songs arranged by Alan Shulman). Columbia set M-654, four 10-inch discs, price \$3.75.

▲Columbia gives this album the rather insipid title *Sincerely Yours*, and on the cover we have the title reproduced in Miss Steven's handwriting and her signature beneath. Somehow the singer's fixed smile on the cover carries through with me in her singing, everything is smooth, innocuous and planned and executed to please the popular taste. Miss Stevens carefully enunciates every word and she sings easily and with tonal opulence, but, there is a lack of spontaneity in her delivery of all these songs, and often

she fails to attain a telling climax (we note this in her very first song—*Homing*). In the notes to this set, we are told that Miss Stevens admirers requested a program of familiar songs like these. Unquestionably, the singer has a large audience who, it may be assumed, do not appreciate her operatic work and prefer to have her in more popular fare. And it is for these that this album is intended. Mr. Shulman gives the singer clean-cut orchestral accompaniments, and the recording is excellent.

—P.G.

FALLA: *El Amor Brujo*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra with Carol Brice (contralto) direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia set M- or MM-633, three discs, price \$4.00.

▲The choice between two recordings of a work is rarely more difficult than in the case of the new Reiner and Stokowski versions of Falla's ballet masterpiece. Last month I took a good deal of pleasure in hearing this music from the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and the effective voice of Nan Merriman (Victor M-1089). And now I find myself enjoying it as it comes from Pittsburgh. Each set is bound to have its partisans and each for unanswerable reasons. Either recording, heard by itself, should have enough excellences to satisfy any hearer, yet each is strong in quite different ways. Last month I made especial mention of Stokowski's playing of the section called *El Círculo Mágico* as "breath-takingly soft and loveley" and I praised the "sheerly beautiful orchestral sound" of the *Pantomime*. I found Nan Merriman "a good choice as soloist, for she has strong chest tones, and sounds properly Spanish." Turning now to the Reiner recording I am struck at once by the greater clarity of instrumental detail in the work as a whole and the generally fuller sound of the Pittsburgh Orchestra as recorded here. Too, the Columbia surfaces are quieter. But my remarks about the *Magic Circle* and the *Pantomime* still stand, for there is no such magic in Reiner's treatment of these particular movements. The choice between the two singers is another real problem. I would not for a moment question the greater lusciousness of Miss Brice's voice (one of the loveliest we have today) or the general intelligence of her singing; yet Miss Merri-

man's performance remains more "properly Spanish." —P.L.M.

GUION: *Home on the Range*; and **HILL:** *The Last Roundup*; sung by Robert Merrill (baritone) with orchestra, direction of Russ Case. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1273, price 75c.

▲ Mr. Merrill seems to be taking over the John Charles Thomas repertoire, which is a pity since he seems less at home in such songs as these than is his famous colleague. As has been remarked before, this big and beautiful baritone voice is one of the finest before the public today, but Merrill has not "the gift to be simple" nor the quality of imagination which might lift the songs out of pure routine. Furthermore his diction needs some attention, not so much for clarity as for cleanliness. The reproduction of the voice and the multicolored orchestra is satisfactory.

—P.L.M.

HANDEL: *Rodelinda*—*Art thou troubled?*; and **GLUCK:** *Orpheus*—*What is Life?*; sung by Kathleen Ferrier (contralto) with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Malcom Sargent. Decca FFRR disc K.1466, price \$1.00.

▲ Miss Ferrier uses a published version of the Handel aria that omits a fine recitative and is prefaced with an interlude that Handel did not write. She also uses English words which have no relation to the original text (*Dove sei, amato bene?*). In the Gluck she also uses a translation which is far removed from the original. There is room for familiar arias to be sung in English but singers should exercise care and discrimination in their choice of texts. When this disc was issued in England, Alec Robertson in *The Gramaphone* very wisely berated those who were responsible for it. He pointed out that the singer "calmly cut out one im-

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portant bar in the middle of the first part of the aria" and called attention to the absurdity of the words in the middle part in their reference to "gentle spring returning" when the text that Handel set was "I am oppressed with torments". It is a pity that the singer was not better advised, for she has an appealing voice and a smooth tonal line. Perhaps the less familiar Handel will be enjoyed by some, but I doubt that many who know the "Che faro senza Euridice" in the Italian or the French will appreciate this poor English substitute. Somehow, the English language does not seem right, certain words falsify Gluck's musical line. Mr. Sargent gives the singer first-rate orchestra accompaniments but the recording is not too well balanced.

—P.G.

OLCOTT-BALL: *Mother Machree*; and MACMURROUGH: *Macushla*; sung by Christopher Lynch (tenor) with orchestra, direction of Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1270, price 75c.

▲ Mr. Lynch here duplicates two of the selections included in Mr. Melton's recent album of *Irish Songs* (Victor M-1090). If in reviewing that set I found the Metropolitan tenor rather too open in his delivery of songs which call for intimacy, I now wish for a little of his brightness in the darker tones of his young Irish colleague. Neither of these

singers can ever have been credited with great subtlety, and neither is the man to make inferior music appear as great. But were I to make a choice between the two, especially in their singing of these present ballads, my preference would go to Melton, who has a certain vitality I miss in Lynch. Mechanically the record is a good one. —P.L.M.

In The Popular Vein

By Enzo Archetti

Rudolf Friml Melodies; Al Goodman and his Orchestra, with Earl Wrightson, baritone, Martha Briney, soprano, and the Guild Choristers. Victor Album P-165; 4-10" discs

● A forthright, well-sung and well-played presentation of some of the best loved and justly popular pieces by Rudolf Friml, most of them from operettas. The Goodman arrangements may not be quite what Friml wrote or had in mind but the playing is smooth and the singing is good. What more can one ask? Even Victor did not think it necessary to include the blurbs on the inside of the album covers as has been the custom in so many popular and other releases of late. Let the music speak for itself. Earl Wrightson and the Choristers present *Song of the Vagabonds* and solo he sings *The Donkey Serenade* from *The Firefly* and *Ma Belle* from *The Three Musketeers*. Martha Briney has *Giannina Mia* from *The Firefly*, *Indian Love Call* from *Rose-Marie* and *L'amour, toujours*, *l'amour* to herself and she is joined by Earl Wrightson for the duets *Only A Rose* from *The Vagabond King* and *Give Me One Hour* from *The White Eagle*. Al Goodman lends excellent support and Victor has provided top-notch recordings.

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Manhattan Moods; Eddie Le Mar and His Orchestra. Capitol Album BD-43; 4-10" discs.

● I'd call this cocktail music—something to listen to over a drink or two, without too much concentration. The arrangements are pleasant, almost à la Duchin, with Eddie Le Mar's piano playing very much to the front. The selections are all from shows popular on Broadway in recent years. This may justify the title in the eyes of some but certainly it is not representative of Manhattan as a whole, however good the music.

We have *Anything Goes* from Cole Porter's show of the same name, *I Married An Angel* from the Rodger and Hart Show of that name, *You Do Something To Me* from Porter's *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, *Fine and Dandy* from Swift-James' musical comedy with that name, *You're A Builder Upper* from Arlen's *Life Begins At 8:30*, *She Didn't Say Yes* from Jerome Kern's *Cat and the Fiddle*, *The Lady Is A Tramp* from Rodgers-Hart's *Babe In Arms*, and *I Guess I'll Have To Change My Plan* from *The Little Show of Dietz-Schwartz*. You must admit this makes a very pleasant 20 or 30 minutes and Capitol helped matters immeasurably with first rate recording.

Jerome Kern's Music: Johnny Mercer, Martha Tilton, the King Cole Trio, Margaret Whiting, The Pied Pipers, Peggy Lee, Hal Derwin, Clark Dennis, and Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol Album CD-41; 4-10" discs.

● This is more a parade of stars than a parade of some of Jerome Kern's best tunes. But Kern's greatness as a tune writer survives all the diverse treatments to which it is subjected here and outshines the stars on every disc. However, I don't want to sound disparaging because there are really some very fine and individual performances. I liked Martha Tilton's and Johnny Mercer's *A Fine Romance* particularly, though Margaret Whiting's *Look For The Silver Lining* is only a shade behind in appeal.

The King Cole Trio's treatment of *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* is original and the Pied Pipers' *Who Is* excellent. But for that matter, so is Peggy Lee's *She Didn't Say Yes*, Hal Derwin's *The Touch of Your Hand*, Clark Dennis' *All the Things You Are*, and Paul Weston's *The Way You Look Tonight* so why split hairs?

Capitol has lavished on this album not only its best stars but also its best engineering. You really shouldn't miss this!

Tales of Uncle Remus from Walt Disney's *Song of the South*; Johnny Mercer, The Pied Pipers, Uncle Remus (James Baskett), Johnny (Bobby Driscoll), and Ginny (Luana Patten). With Billy May and His Orchestra. Capitol Album CC-40; 3-10" discs.

● If the reaction of my five year old son counts for anything, this is the best set of children's records that has been issued in years. In spite of the fact that he has seen the picture three times already, these records get almost a daily going over, and the words and music—from cover to cover—have almost been committed to memory.

The arrangement of the tales and original music from the film is happily contrived. Apparently, it is a blend of studio and sound track recording but it's difficult to say which is which and where one ends and the other begins. Best of all, there is the appealing voice of James Baskett, the Uncle Remus of the film, telling the three tales which comprise the cartoon portion of the *Song of the South* and the

original voices of Bre'r Rabbit, Bre'r Fox, and Bre'r Bear. Really a splendid album, one which will live in the memories of children as long as Walt Disney's delightful interpretation of the Uncle Remus tales. Capitol deserves a hearty round of applause.

Gene Autry's Western Classics; Columbia Album C-120; 4-10" discs.

● Maybe this album wasn't planned as such but it certainly should go over with a bang with the children. There are eight numbers which have long been associated with Gene Autry, including his theme song *Back In the Saddle Again*, each with instrumental (meaning Gene's guitar) or string band accompaniment. Each is sung as only Gene can sing it. This is said with all the criticism it implies, knowing full well that any adverse criticism I may voice here will not budge Gene one fraction of an inch from the pedestal on which his millions of fans, children and adults alike, have placed him. All I can say, then, is that if you are among those millions, you'll probably rate this album as the greatest collection of West-

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ern songs ever issued. If you are not, you won't have much trouble taking or leaving it.

Parenthetically, my five year old son enjoys this set and has appropriated it as his own. He hasn't seen Gene Autry on the screen and therefore hasn't had a chance yet to make comparisons or to set up a King of the Cowboys of his own but just the same he thinks this set is great. Maybe I'm wrong!

Columbia has done very well by Gene, technically speaking, and this will help you enjoy, perhaps, *Home On the Range* and *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, two of the numbers in the set which are a shade above the others.

Woody Herman and His Woodchoppers; Columbia Album C-121; 4-10" discs.

Personnel: Woody Herman, clarinet; Bill Harris, trombone; Joe "Flip" Phillips, tenor sax; Sonny Berman, trumpet; Jimmy Rowles, piano; Chubby Jackson, bass; Billy Bauer, guitar; Red Norvo, vibes; Don Lamond, drums; and on two of the sides: Charles Jagelka, guitar; Joe Mondragon, bass.

It is pretty generally agreed among the jazz cognoscenti of today that Woody Herman's is the best of the white bands. Benny Goodman notwithstanding, not only because of the high quality of each instrumentalist in it but also because of the freshness in its approach to any number played, even the popular drivel of the day. Actually, they mean the Woodchoppers which is a unit from the big band. This unit has placed Woody in the top bracket of real jazz makers. It is in the groove and out of the rut.

Here have been assembled eight numbers, all of which are more or less familiar, in more or less these same arrangements, to all lovers of good jazz. I say "more or less" because they are improvisations which, though their general outline is arranged beforehand, their final form and inspiration exists only in the minds of the players and these are never twice the same.

Inspiration and virtuosity ran high at this session. There is hardly a dull moment from any player throughout all eight sides. Woody's clarinet playing, which has brought him words of praise from many musicians and has even inspired Stravinsky to write a concerto for clarinet, is consistently first rate throughout. And there are some really brilliant moments by Billy Harris, Sonny Berman, and Red Norvo. Picking out a side which is even one shade better than the others is practically an impossibility. All I can say is that I personally found the faster numbers more exciting but

You can't go wrong with any. You have *Someday, Sweetheart*; *I Surrender, Dear*; *Four Men On A Horse*; *Lost Weekend*; *Nero's Conception*; *Igor*; *Steps*; and *Pam* to choose from. The recording is first-rate.

Music For Dancing: The Foxtrot; Paul Sparr and His Hotel St. Regis Orchestra. Disc Album 401; 4-10" discs.

● This is one of the series of albums prepared by Disc for dance instruction. The set was arranged for dancing by the well-known dance instructor, Albert Butler, with the collaboration of Duilio Sherbo who, for many years, has been associated with the development of smooth Foxtrot music and who has been responsible for the development of many first rate dance orchestras like Emil Coleman's, Jack Harris and Jack Shilkret's—to name but a few. Since 1939, Sherbo has been musical director at the Hotel St. Regis in New York and Paul Sparr, whose orchestra recorded this album of foxtrots, is the newest star in the Sherbo Galaxy.

Twelve numbers, all familiar or popular pieces (like *Whispering*, *Three Little Words*, *They Didn't Believe Me*, *Sometimes I'm Happy*, etc.) are used to demonstrate the slow, medium, and fast foxtrots. Disc has even given this set better than usual engineering and surfaces.

Concertos For Dancing; Freddy Martin and His Orchestra. Victor Album P-169; 4-10" discs.

● The much maligned classic piano concerto is once again given a going over by Freddy Martin, this time for dancing purposes. *The Tschaikowsky*, *The Rachmaninoff*, and *The Grieg* are battered and pounded down to the dimensions of one ten inch side. For good measure, *The Cornish Rhapsody* of Hubert Bath and Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto* (the labels modestly admit that only the themes from this film music are used) gets similar treatment. The rest of the numbers consist of Cole Porter's *Night and Day*, the Steiner-Rabinowitz's *Symphonie Moderne*, and Provost's *Intermezzo* (the latter with a vocal by Clyde Rogers) but why they are called concertos is another riddle. The pianist throughout is Jack Fine, a man of no mean ability, in spite of the tastelessness of the whole business.

Lost Love (Based on the Pilgrims' Chorus from Berloiz' *Harold In Italy*), and *Beethoven's End* (Based on the Adagio from Beethoven's *Sonata Pathetique*); Henri Rene and his Orchestra, with chorus. Victor 38-2010.

Undercurrent (Based on Themes from Brahms' Third Symphony), and *Traumerei* (Schumann) (used in the Motion Picture *Love Story*); Al Goodman and His Orchestra, with Oscar Shumsky, violinist, and Vladimir Sokoloff, pianist. Victor 46-0008.

● Pilfering from the masters continues to be the rage of the day. And the sad part of it all is, that "composer" and audience alike do not seem to realize the utter tastelessness of it all. By just such acts the writers admit the barrenness of their minds—their inability to create something original to meet even so simple a situation as a modern movie plot. And the listeners who rave and drool over such inanities admit their lack of taste and appreciation for better things in life.

It is really a pity that good musicians, engineering, and wax is wasted on such stuff.

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